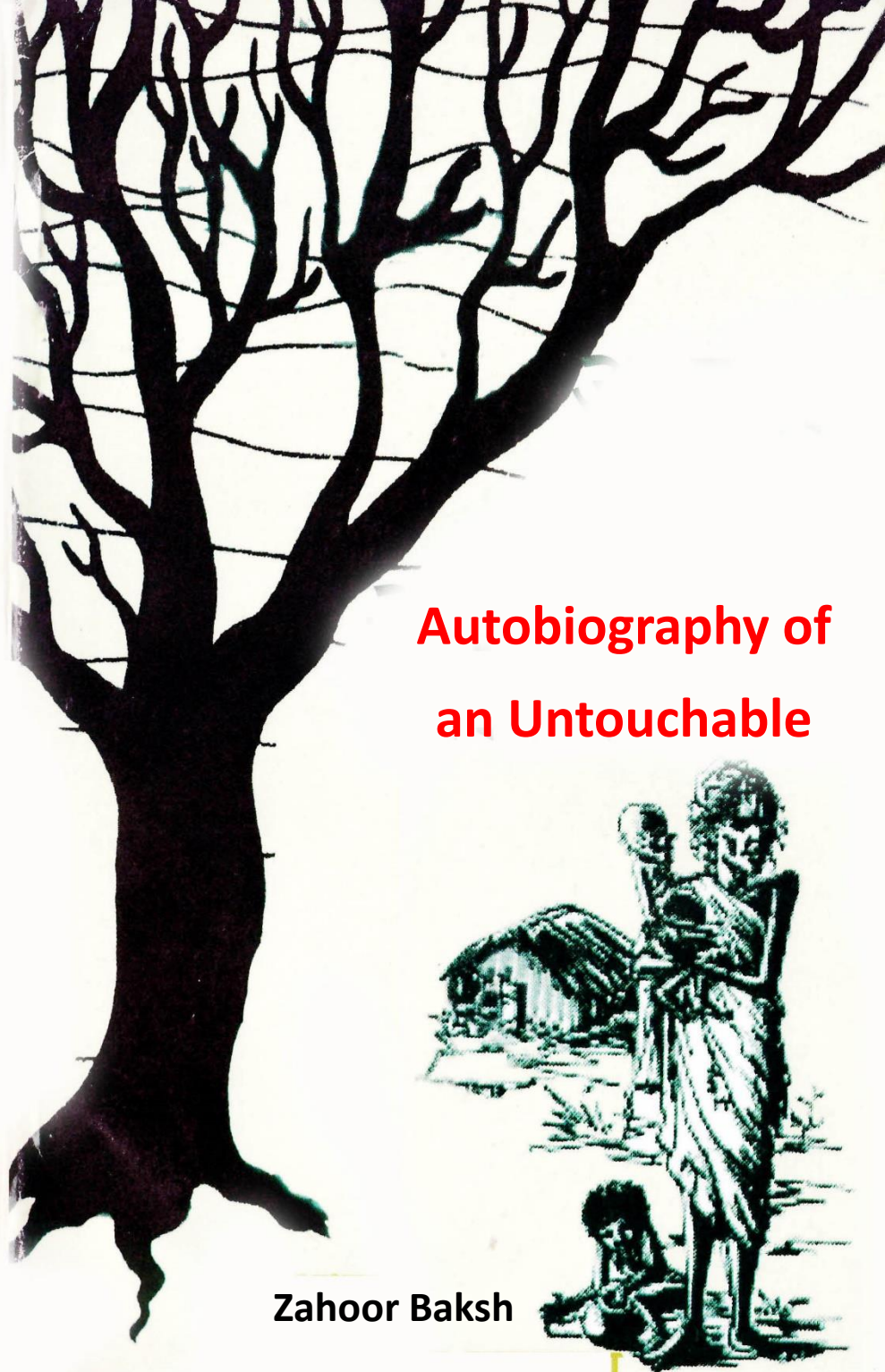


In Hindi literature there is a long tradition of concern towards atrocities on untouchables. This story titled "Achoot" or "Untouchable" by popular writer teacher Zahoor Baksh was first published in the special issue "Achoot" of the monthly magazine "Chand". It was published in 1927. In this story there is a heart-wrenching account of an untouchable family's ordeals. The story is fictional, but it has its basis in Hindu society where there was ruthless exploitation and oppression of untouchables. Even women and children of untouchables were not spared. However, one such child gets help from the missionaries. After getting education, he moves ahead and becomes a Tehsildar. This story tells us about the background - why a large group of people abandoned Hinduism and become Muslims and Christians. The message of the story is that no one should be considered superior or inferior to anyone else and everyone should be treated humanely and with respect.

Autobiography of an Untouchable

Zahoor Baksh



Autobiography of an Untouchable

Mr. Thomas was an Indian Christian. His demeanour was cheerful, happy, and he was quick-witted. His body was strong and wheatish in colour. He very much liked to wear a Sahib's dress. In those days he was a Tehsildar in Rampur. There was a great strangeness in his nature. He had great hatred for Hindus. While dealing with legal cases of Hindus he was stricter than necessary. The Hindu employees under his authority were also not happy with him. But, his feelings towards Muslims were of a different type. While judging the cases of Muslims, his cruelty often vanished! On Muslim employees – even a low-level Muslim peon, he showered his love and affection. Christians anyway were his caste brothers and a deep love for them was a natural thing. This difference in view point of Thomas Sahib towards different religious communities somehow made me deeply unhappy.

I was employed as Thomas Sahib's reader in the court. Being a caste Brahmin, Thomas Sahib always looked at me with a crooked gaze. No matter how hard I worked or how carefully I did my work but I could not escape the Saheb's rebuke. With me worked a junior Munshi. He was quite careless but he had become familiar with Sahib's temperament, so he always ended up doing shoddy and careless work. But, Sahib, never scolded him. Sahib always let him off with a sweet rebuke. My heart ached after watching Sahib's double standards from close quarters. I used to think in my mind – why is Sahib always scolding and pulling me down. What harm have I done? But in a government job, while confronting a senior officer – of the rank of a magistrate, speaking out your mind will only bring you more trouble. So, I felt utterly helpless, and remained in despair.

Once my wife fell ill. I felt the need to take a few days leave to take her to a doctor and buy her medicines. I asked for only five days leave from Thomas sir, but instead of showing sympathy he rebuked me severely. My wife was ill, which had made me sad. But the Sahib's rebuke made my whole-body tremble with anger. My eyes turned red and I clenched my fists in anger. But, after one glance at Sahib's stern face I suppressed my anger. Still, I decided that today I will certainly talk to Sahib about this matter and ask him the reason for his unhappiness.

As soon as the court closed, I went to Thomas Sahib's bungalow. At that time, he was sitting on a chair and happily smoking a cigar. I saluted him and stood silently. Sir exhaled some smoke and said to me, "What is it Pandit?"

I said very politely, "Sir, please forgive my crime. I wish to make a request."



After listening, Thomas Sahib said somewhat dryly, “I understand! You people want nothing more than a holiday? All the time you are asking for holidays! How long can I keep granting you holidays?”

“No sir! I want to plead about something else. But I am afraid to say it - lest you become angry.”

Sahib said, “What is there to be afraid of? Speak out your mind!”

“Sir! Whenever I see you, you are always unhappy with Hindus. You know I work hard and am diligent in my work. I also never even ask for leave. My junior Munshi is a Muslim, and you know the quality of his work. My wife is ill—seriously ill. I am your obedient servant and was hoping for your sympathy and help. But in return you insulted me and that made me very sad. I want to know why are you so unhappy with Hindus. What great sins have the Hindus committed?”

Though I said all that, but in my hearts of hearts I was very afraid and I shook with fear. I couldn't even look straight at him. I stood there looking down! But Sahib was not unhappy! I was very surprised at that! Finally, I gathered enough courage and looked up! Sahib was in deep thought and there were wrinkles on his forehead. He took a puff and said very seriously, “Pandit! You don't have to ask me. I have great hatred for Hindus. One glance at them and my blood begins to boil. Oh! you ask me, what sins have the Hindus committed? No one can count the infinite sins of the Hindus!

I think there is no other community in this big wide world which is as sinful as the Hindus! You people say, Christian are sinners because they always eye the property of others! Muslims are sinners – they are big sinners because they always cause pain to the Hindus. But Pandit! There is nothing to feel bad about that. I say, Christians and Muslims are by no means as sinful as the Hindus. Christians and Muslims may torment other people, but at least they love their own community. They help their brothers and sisters in times of happiness and sorrow. But the Hindu community, does not even know how to love its own people. On the contrary, it torments its own people. They are merciless and cruel towards the poor of their own race. The upper castes laugh when the lower caste people weep in front of them. Oh! this utter fiendishness! There is no limit to their extreme cruelty. There is no race in the world crueller than the Hindus. Still, you ask what sins have the Hindus committed? Oh man! Do you know who I am? I am a Hindu born in this country of yours, in this religion of yours. Who made me a Christian? You and only you. Still, you ask me what harm have Hindus done to me? You lifted me from the lap of Ram and Krishna and threw me into the lap of Jesus. Is this a common and pardonable sin? Who are you to me now? How am I related to the Hindu religion? If I don't hate them, do I hate those who helped me in my difficult times and made a man out of me by bringing me up, and educating me?”

Here was this gentleman abusing my caste right in front of me. Seeing this I felt extremely sad. I felt very angry, but the self-respect of a subordinate man immediately evaporates as soon as he looks at his stomach. I asked him, "Sir, what were you saying? I did not get it."

Sahib smiled and said, "How will you understand. Why? If your understanding and intelligence were so sharp, then then why would I become a Christian? Okay, sit down now. How long will you keep standing?"

As soon as I received permission, I sat on the mattress and started thinking in my mind. I thought--what has happened to Sahib today? He never uttered such nonsense before. His family wanted to change its religion, and become Christians. Is this my fault or any the fault of the Hindu society?

After pausing for a while, Sahib asked me, "Why Pandit? If a Bhangi or Basor (untouchable) comes and sits on the bench, what will you do?"

I simply replied, "Sir! This question is not worth asking. First of all, I will not let him sit on the bench, and if he sits, I will give him a good thrashing. A Bhangi or an untouchable caste like Basor has no right to sit with an upper caste Brahmin like me. A Bhangi-Basor is not entitled to my high status and dignity in society. Yes, after thrashing him up I will go home and purify myself."

Sahib said, "Why do you hate the lower castes so much? Aren't they human beings? Don't they have a throbbing heart like you in their chest? Didn't the God who created you also created them."



“Sahib, who can deny the fact that God also created them too. God has created the whole universe, and that is also where the Bhangi-Basor came from? They also have a heart, but God gave them birth in a lower caste. The lower castes were born only to serve us. Our theology-makers have determined their social limits. We become impure even if their shadow falls on us. We become sinners and have to atone for that. Their well-being lies in the fact that they serve us with all their heart and soul while living according to their limits. Secondly, the conduct and thoughts of the Shudras are impure. So why should we maintain contact with them? Why should we not hate them?”

Sahib said, “Okay, for a while we will say you are right. But is the conduct and thoughts of all Shudras impure? The conduct and thoughts of many Shudras are very pious. On the contrary the conduct and thoughts of all upper caste Hindus is not pure. There are many Brahmins who steal and tell lies every day. They drink alcohol and commit adultery. There is no trace of Brahminism among them. Now tell me, who is better - a corrupt Brahmin or a pious Shudra?”

I said, “Because of birth in a Brahmin family, a corrupt Brahmin will still be considered superior to a hundred pious Shudras. Sir, don’t mistake me, but a Brahmin is Brahmin and a Shudra is Shudra. A Shudra can never equal a Brahmin? Even if I think a Shudra to be superior to a Brahmin, but still society will not consider him superior.”

Sahib said, “This is the blind tradition you people follow. You destroy your theology with your own hands. It is clearly stated in Manusmriti that a Brahmin who does not follow the Brahmin-religion is not a Brahmin. Such a Brahmin is worse than a Chandal. And a Chandal can also attain a higher position by being pure and pious. Who was Ajamil? Who was Shabari? How did they achieve a superior position? But now everywhere things have gone wrong and corrupted. To maintain and preserve your own self-interests and superiority you treat the Shudras worse than animals. You consider them inferior, as if they are not human at all! Still whenever it is convenient you quote your religious scriptures. Now tell me, if any Shudra wants to pray to Thakur ji in your temple, will you let him do that or not?”

I said, “Sahib! All folk traditions have some deep meaning embedded in them. The Shudras have been considered untouchable since the beginning. That's why we hate them, how can this feeling go away? As for their entering the temple, it is an impossible thing. If the Sudras enter the temple by their mere touch, we will become impure. The temple will also be defiled. And this will be a grave insult to Thakur ji. The untouchables can themselves build their own temples and visit Thakur ji with happiness.”

Sahib said, "Wow! What can I say! Such discrimination against untouchables even in the court of God! When God created untouchables, did he not become impure? Was it not an insult to God? But as soon as an untouchable steps into your temple, the temple becomes impure and your Gods are insulted. And when the untouchables build their own temple, install a God in it, and daily worship him, then there will be no limit to insulting God. Will you people bear such blatant insult to God, on a daily basis? There is the limit to God's anger. God's wrath will destroy this world. Then where will you go?"

I could not think of any answer to the question asked by Sahib. I felt astounded! Sahib continued, "Because of this mentality you people oppress the untouchables. Their mere shadows make you impure. They serve you day and night, yet you hate them and abuse them. A dog can happily sit on your bed, but an untouchable cannot even step on the stairs of your house. They cannot draw water from your wells. They cannot even look up towards your temple. These and many other atrocities are rewards for their services. Do you know, how much this heartlessness of yours hurts them and how much you lose in the process?"



Sahib said, “Okay listen, I remembered a very old incident. There lived a Basor (untouchable) family in a small village. Its dilapidated house was in a corner just outside the village. A person from a low caste like Basor cannot even stay inside the village for a long time. So, building a house inside the village was an impossibility. The house was adjacent to the forest. Now you can imagine how difficult it must be to live near the forest. Each day was spent in a dreadful state. As evening dawned the house door were shut for fear of wild animals, who roared and screamed outside. The family often stayed awake the whole night trembling in fear of the wild beasts. In India the untouchable castes living on the outskirts of cities and villages, often live in such fear.

“This Basor family was a small one with only three members. There was husband and wife and their eight-ten-year-old son. Life was difficult for them. They seldom had food for two meals, and they never wore good clothes. The Basor and his wife had to serve the entire village. On every auspicious occasion in the village the Basor had play a musical instrument. His wife was the village midwife. For their services the Basor family were entitled to receive a limited quantity of grains from each farmer’s family. But they had to make several trips and plead earnestly to get these grains. They never got their full entitlement. The farmers accused the Basor family, and on some pretext or the other reduced the quantity of grains. Sometimes, on auspicious occasions, they would also be given a few old clothes. To show their generosity some kind donors would even gift them a few coins! In their spare time the Basor family made baskets, winnowing fans, mats and other household objects from

bamboo. Sometimes they were gifted old and stale chapattis. With this meagre income this untouchable couple with great difficulty made ends meet. Still, they lived peacefully and were content. They prayed for the blessing to their donors.

Now listen to this incident. It was the summer season and the village Malgujar's son was getting married. The Basor had to go to the Malgujar's house to play music on this auspicious occasion. The poor Basor hoped to earn some money. Of course, he was dead afraid of the Malgujar. With this hope the poor Basor sat at the Malgujar's door in the sun all day long and played music. But the scorching sun turned out to be fatal for him. By evening he developed fever. As soon as he returned home, he lay down on the mat. In the morning, he could not go to the Malgujar's place. But in a little while the Malgujar's peon appeared at the Basor’s door like a *Yamdoot*. He came and roared, “You wicked man! What do you think of yourself? Why didn’t you come with the musical instrument? Everyone was waiting for you!” At that time the Basor had high fever, his head was bursting with pain and his eyes were blood red. He humbly asked the peon, “Sir! I'm dying of fever otherwise I would have reached there by now. “I don't even have the courage to walk a few steps.” Even if a poor person tells the truth, who cares? Everyone agrees that he is a wicked person, isn't he? As soon as the peon heard the Basor, he flared up. He shouted, “You swine, I know very well that you are an ace scoundrel! You must have drunk last night. What else? Now you make petty excuses!

Come with me just now, or else?" No matter how much the Basor cried and pleaded, or how much his wife prayed, but the Malgujar's peon remained unmoved. If the pitiful prayers could melt the heart of the Malgujar's peon then will his fiefdom last? The poor couple's pleadings went in vain. With tears in his eyes the Basor went with the peon. When he narrated his troubles to the Malgujar, he ordered his servants, "Who allowed this scoundrel to settle in the village? Drive him out of the village and give him such a good trashing that he will always remember." What could the Basor do now? He risked his life and kept playing music till evening. After the night lamps were lit, he staggering back home. By the time he reached his door, he felt dizzy and fainted. He fell down and he did not regain consciousness. By midnight the light of his life was extinguished! The pure soul of this untouchable left his body and migrated to some unknown holy land. The poor man's wife became a widow and destitute, and his son became an orphan. The mother and son sat in the forest area and spent the night in dark. How must they have felt?



In the morning the birds started chirping and the wind started blowing. The world was abuzz with new life. In such a moment of bliss the Basor's wife opened the house door with a crying heart. At that moment only one question plagued her – how to dispose her husband's dead body. She had no money and the whole village considered her impure and an untouchable. How would she perform her husband's last rites? Oh! How painful is the life of an untouchable! There is no place for him even after death! For an untouchable, death is even harder than life! In another corner of the village lived another Basor family. The Basor's widow made her innocent child sit near her husband's dead body and went to the other Basor family.

The man said, "Sister, I am as poor and unfortunate as you. What can a small man like me do? You, please go to the Malgujar. Ok, I will also accompany you. Maybe he will take some pity on you and make some arrangements."

In a little while the Basor's widow along with the other Basor reached the Malgujar's place. By then the Malgujar was sitting in his hall, smoking a hookah. As soon as she saw the Malgujar the Basorin started crying loudly.

She wailed, "Huzoor, I have lost everything! God has snatched away my husband!" The Malgujar was a brute animal with not an iota of kindness in its heart. He shouted angrily, "What can I do? I cannot bring your husband back. You are a bad omen and you have spoilt my beautiful morning." Then the Basor's widow with folded hands pleaded with him, "Huzoor! You tell the truth. No one can bring back a dead man. What is fated happens, and no one can change it. Now please make some arrangements, so that the dead body of my poor husband can be disposed of."





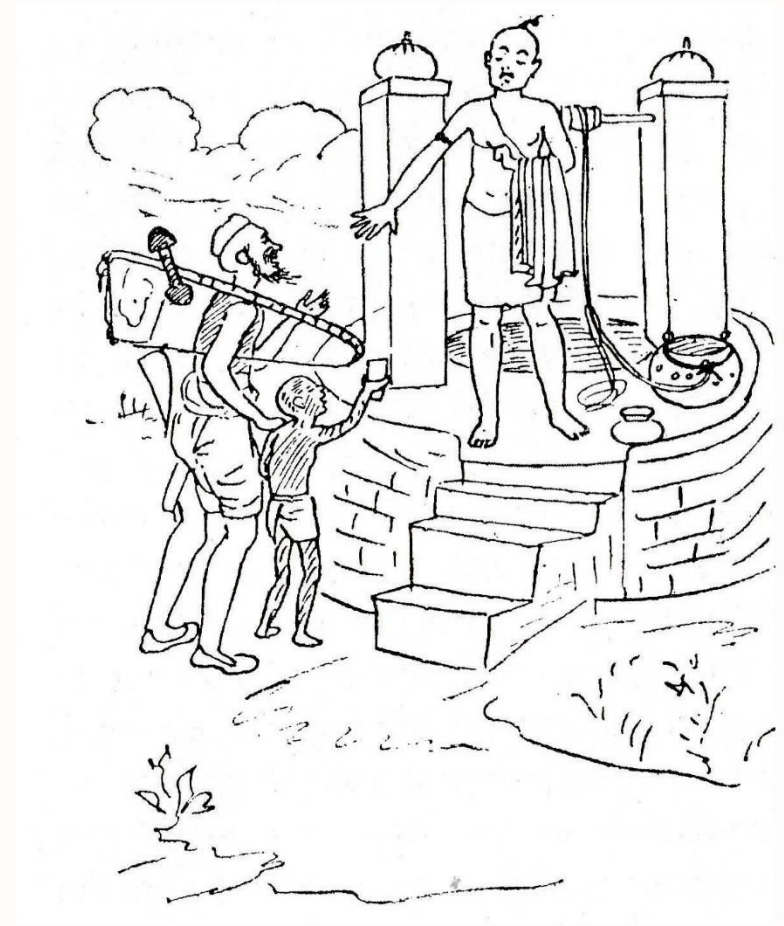
To this the Malgujar shouted even more sharply, "Okay, so you think I am indebted to your father? I will not be able to help. Go away. Still the poor Basor with folded hands kept pleading for the widow in a timid voice, "No Huzoor! Please don't say this! You are the only help we have. We live in your kingdom. If you don't listen to our pain, who will? If you don't help us, who will?" But all these earnest pleadings fell on a stony heart. The Malgujar roared, "I have already told you that I will not be able to help! Go away from here, otherwise?" But the Basor's widow still lamented. She turned back to the Malgujar and said, "Father! I am your daughter. Please have mercy on me!" Now the Malgujar's anger flared up even more. He said, "Oh my! Such a bad omen so early in the morning! And on top of that, so much shouting! These scoundrels have made life hell for me! Now I can't bear their mischief anymore. Am I the only one who lives in this village that you came straight to my place? Someone, please forcefully remove these people from here!"

When they saw the situation worsening, both the widow and the Basor went away. There were a few people in the village who were considered good people. They went to all their houses. Some got angry, some scorned and others were abusive. But among those who considered themselves superior there was not a single person who offered help. Among the high castes, forget about help, no one even said a few words of sympathy to the Basor's widow. This is the reality of the high caste Hindus, who treat their own people so despicably. All his life the dead Basor remained a part of that village and Hindu society and he served it well. While serving them he sacrificed his own life! Was this not the duty of Hindu society to offer some help at the death of one of its true servants, perform the last rites on his dead body with due respect and consoled his widowed wife affectionately? But no, Hindu society considers dereliction, as its duty and finds joy in it. India is perhaps one such country where the status of a human being is worse than that of an animal and where the Hindu society consider lower castes disgusting and makes them cry during their lives and even after their death. Who was superior? The untouchable, or those Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas who considered themselves upper castes but who laughed and insulted him even after seeing his suffering? Well!



Now the poor Basor's widow saw darkness all around her. How will her husband's body be taken to the crematorium; how will it be burnt? Thinking about this, she became distraught and she asked the Basor, "Brother, what should I do now? Will the dead body remain lying like this?" The Basor said, "Sister, don't be afraid. Fear will not help us. God protects the dignity of all suffering people! God will also worry about us. I will go home, and get as much fuel as I can." The Basor took out all the firewood from his house and kept it outside. The Basor took two-three turns to bring all the fuel from his house, but it was not enough to cremate the dead body. Then the Basor's widow got half the roof removed from her house. After this both of them carried the dead body on a wooden door plank to the crematorium. Then they both somehow disposed the body! Pandit, just think about the sad plight of the widow. Time must be hanging heavy on her! First, her husband died. Secondly, instead of helping her, the other villagers insulted her. Thirdly, she had to work so hard to complete the last rites of her dead husband. In that process she had to destroy her own house. Fourthly, her hungry and thirsty little child must have followed her everywhere. Oh! It must have been truly horrendous for her. When such suffering befalls a human being should the others in their hollow superiority, watch such a pitiful scene with pride. What fiendishness, how heartless! Is this the superiority of your Hindu society? Is it?"

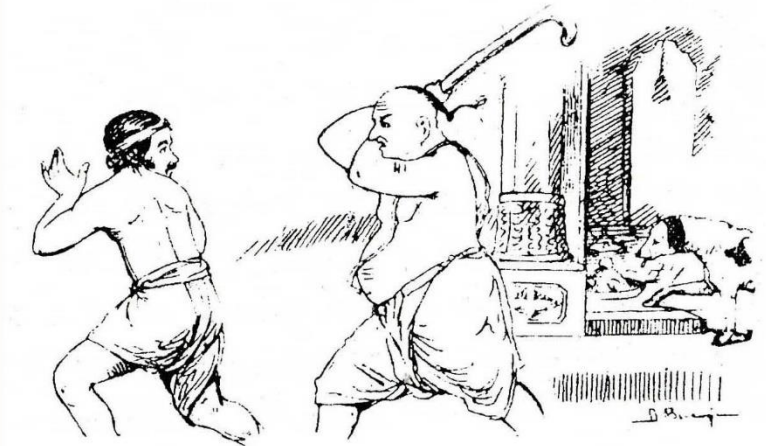
Saying this, Sahib became silent! His eyes became misty. Two tears flowed down his cheeks! I had never seen such tenderness and such sadness on his face. I just stared at him quietly for a while. After keeping quiet for a few moments Sahib again said, "Pandit, do you want to hear more about the fame and accomplishments of your society? Okay, listen, this sad story doesn't end here. You will see even more pitiful scenes. Due to the cruelty of the villagers, the poor and kind Basor felt very sad and helpless. Next day he came to Basor's widow and said, "Sister! Now there is no point in living in this village. We have already experienced the unkindness of its people. There is no one else of my caste here. If I happen to die tomorrow, my dead body will be eaten by crows and dogs. So, I will not stay here anymore. Today itself I will go to another place. You too don't stay here! It is better to stay in the jungle and die of hunger. Over there no one will frown at us, no one will abuse us of crimes we have not committed. After listening to the anguished voice of a well wisher the Basor's widow cried bitterly and said, "Brother you go away from here. It is best not to live with people like these. But where will I go with my child? My life is in the hands of God." Listening to this the poor man's eyes filled with tears and he said in sadness, "Sister! I would have happily taken you with me, but the time is not right. I myself don't know where all I will wonder and ultimately settle. But once I settle at a place, then I will come to fetch you." Thus, after consoling the widow the Basor went away. The villagers never saw him again. After a long time, someone said that he had cross the seven seas and settled in Fiji.



“Now listen to the story of the Basor’s widow and her son. After her husband's death she became very sad. Now her life was centred only on her son! He was the apple of her eye. The son was the centre of her hopes, her support and her only happiness. Even though her income had decreased due to her husband's death, she did her best not to make her son feel sad. Instead of eating herself she would feed her son. She doted on her son and was willing to give her life for his sake. Her son's name was Damru. Due to mother's pampering Damru become quite independent and a little spoilt. Immediately after eating his food, he would go out. But his mother did not say anything to him.

There were many *Ber* trees growing in the backyard of the Malgujar's house. Damru loved eating those eating sweet berries, so he often went there. The Malgujar’s seven-eight-year-old son also came there to pick berries. Children are innocent, they don't understand discrimination between upper and lower castes. Damru would climb a tree and then shake its branches. Then sweet *Bers* would start raining. The Malgujar’s son would pick up the berries and then both of them would share and eat them. Gradually the two became friends and started loving each other. They both kept looking for each other and whenever they met, they were very happy. One day the Malgujar saw the two boys together. This made the Malgujar very anger. He slapped his son twice and shouted, “Beware! Leave the company of this despicable boy.” Damru being an untouchable was saved, but the Malgujar also warned him, “If you dare to come again then I will get you skinned.” The Malgujar warned and threatened the children but they were not able to give up their temptation of eating the juicy berries. You can stop children, threaten them, and even beat them. But the two friends kept meeting.

There was also a small temple in the village, where sometimes people came for *kirtan* - to sing religious hymns. One day the Malgujar's son said to Damru, “Today there will be a big ceremony and puja in the temple. After the puja sweet *pedas* will be distributed as prasad. Please come with me. Hearing about the sweet *pedas*, Damru started dancing. Poor Damru didn't know that his entry into the temple would make it impure. It was not in his destiny to receive God's blessings. Clapping his hands Damru reached the temple. As soon as the others saw Damru in the temple there was a huge commotion. Everyone called him low caste - Basor. The people became anxious and wanted to protect their own purity! Seeing the hullabaloo, Damru stood stunned, the poor fellow had got into trouble.



As soon as the priest saw the people panic, he became nervous. As soon as he spotted Damru, he lost his temper. The thoughts of purity and impurity disappeared from his mind. Oh God! In *Kalyug* these people have become very emboldened. Our goodwill is in the hands of God. So, saying the priest pounced on Damru! He beat Damru so badly that no one will ever beat even an animal. Damru went to God's court with the hope of getting some sweet *prasad*. But he was beaten so badly that he fell down flat on his face. The Hindus are great at preaching about non-violence. Some Hindu communities also show great kindness towards small insects but in their big hearts they have no compassion, not a trace of mercy for untouchables in human form. They think that the low caste untouchables are impure, and the religion of upper caste Hindus will be defiled by their mere touch.

Instead of sweet *prasad*, Damru got thrashed badly. He returned home crying and groaning in pain. His mother was shocked after seeing his condition. She took Damru in her lap and asked with great affection, "Son, what happened?" Crying bitterly, Damru recounted the whole story. After listening, tears flowed from the mother's eyes. She kissed Damru's cheek and asked, "Son, why did you go there? Henceforth you should not go there." Damru said, "Mother! Why shouldn't I go there? Everyone goes there to get a glimpse of Thakur ji. Why are you crying?" Mother replied, "The others can go there. But we can't go there, because we are untouchables." Damru could not understand his mother's words and with great insistence he asked, "Mother, who is an untouchable? What is the difference between them and us? I don't see any difference but for the fact that we wear old, torn clothes." Damru's mother had no answer to this question. Mother only cried. Then Damru said, "Okay mother, please don't cry. From now onwards I will never step into the temple."

Because Damru had entered the temple, the priest had given him a harsh punishment. But that was not enough to calm down the villager's ire. They created a huge uproar. They complained to the Malgujar who in turn called the Basor's widow. Everyone in the village was mad with anger. They didn't touch the Basor's widow because she was an untouchable otherwise only god knows what they would have done to her. But they hurled all kinds of abuses at her.



The Basor's widow stood with folded hands in front of them and pleaded, "Maharaj, he is an innocent child. He didn't even know whether to go to the temple or not. I never asked him to go to the temple. Kindly forgive the child's crime. This won't happen again. After dealing with the angry crowd, she told her son, "Damru, don't ever enter the temple again. Stay and play at home only. If you go somewhere and if anyone reprimands you, I will punish you very badly."

Poor Damru got badly scared. From that day he stopped going anywhere. Mother also took special care of him, but children start feeling suffocated in bondage. After a few days at home, Damru once again felt like roaming around, going here and there. One day taking advantage of the opportunity, he set out to play. After playing for a while Damru felt thirsty. At that moment a few women were drawing water from the well. Damru went to the well in the hope of drinking water. He asked a woman for water but instead of offering him water she abused him. The other women slammed their pitchers on the ground. Damru was stunned on seeing this. Like before, he thought he might again get into trouble. This thought made the poor boy tremble. He ran home and hid there. This incident created an even greater uproar in the village. Soon the Basor's widow was summoned to the Malgujar's house. He roared at her, "Look woman! You have become incorrigible. You have completely spoilt that brat. Today he defiled the well! Where will people get drinking water now?" When the Basor's widow heard this, life almost ebbed out of her poor body. With folded hands she said, "Huzur, I always keep my son in front of my eyes and I keep telling him not to get into trouble. Today he escaped unnoticed."



The Malgujar was very upset and he replied in the same tone, "I know you very well. You will not understand like this." Then the Malgujar gave orders to one of his peons to give the woman a good thrashing. "There is no harm, just take a bath afterwards," he said. Soon the peon pounced on the weak woman. How she cried and pleaded, but her pitiful cries touched no one's heart. Now tell me Pandit! This is the vow of non-violence of your ideal society. This incident, exemplifies it beautifully. Bravery of Hindu men lies only in torturing their own people, especially in making their helpless women weep copious tears. Well!

The Basor's widow reached home crying. She made a stern face and asked her son, "Why did you go to the well?" The poor boy started trembling with fear. There were tears in his eyes. He said, "Mother, I was feeling thirsty. Everyone goes to the well to drink water. So, I also went there. There were two-three other boys there. No one said anything to them." But the mother did not pay any attention to the innocence of the child. Her heart was burning with insult and anger. After hearing the child's reply she could not stop herself. She started beating the child. "No mother! Stop mother!" cried the boy and clung to her feet, but the mother continued to beat. In the end the boy fell on the ground. He started hiccupping while crying. Seeing her son's condition, the mother's heart started churning within. She took the child in her arms, hugged him to her heart and started crying bitterly. For a long time, the mother and son kept crying. No fire was lit that day, and no food was cooked in the house that day. Both mother and son remained hungry. Because of your Hindu society how many destitute people have suffered these cruel atrocities? Because of these atrocities who knows how many people suffer in agony day and night. But soon the cold sighs of these sad people will not let you sleep happily. The time is not far when you will have to stop these atrocities, and you will have to atone for your sins by shedding tears of blood.

From that day onwards the Basor's widow started feeling especially worried. She always thought this - I live among such religious zealots, whose religion is defiled by my mere shadow. There is no person of my caste here, nor anyone who is helpful. By living among such people how will I be able to steer the raft of my life? If my innocent child unknowingly commits even a small mistake these people are hell bent on beating and killing him. My son has already committed two crimes. If he does something wrong again, then who knows what will these people do!



My God! Please take pity on my child. In the end God heard her timid voice. A few days later two Christian Missionary nuns came to the village. They delivered Jesus Christ's message of love and peace to the village women. The Basor's widow also heard their sermon. Their kind nature gave the Basor's widow great hope. She told the nuns the sad story of her life. After hearing her story, the nuns had tears in their eyes. They told the Basor's widow - Christ came on earth to remove the sorrow and sufferings of people. Please come with us. Christ will have mercy on you.

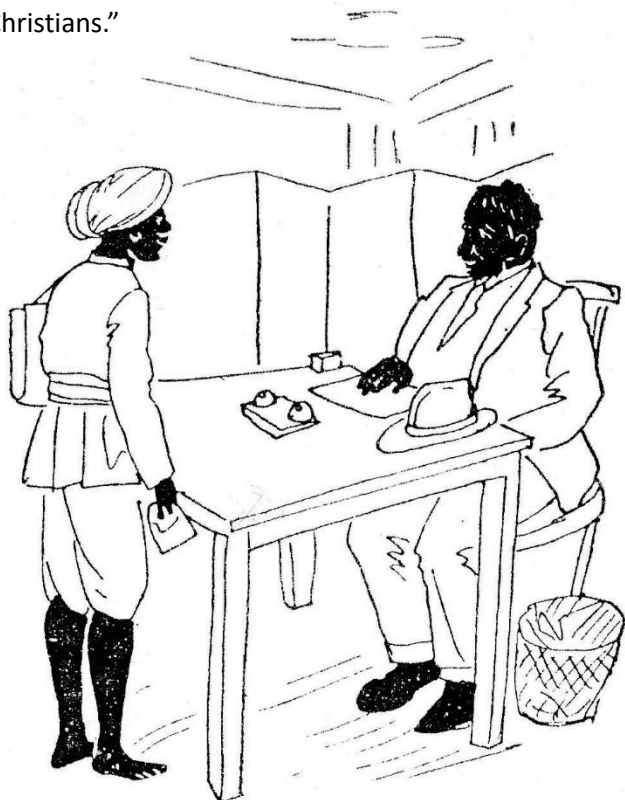
The Basor's widow was very happy. She took her son and went with the nuns. After this her stream of his life started flowing in a different direction. She entered a new world, where no one was big or small, no one was high nor low – everyone was equal. Everyone cared for the happiness and sorrow of the others. There was no one here to rebuke or taunt the Basor's widow. Everyone treated her like a friend. Now she wore good clothes and ate good food. Here everyone loved her beloved son. No one hated him. The son also wore good clothes and ate good food. He played with beautiful toys. Like birds free in the field, he ran and wondered all around. He could touch anyone and hug whoever he wished. Be it the bungalow or the church, he went wherever he wished. But his presence did not defile the bungalow nor did it make anyone impure. Christ really showed his mercy on this mother and son duo. "Now tell me Pandit, what harm did you suffer when these two people became Christians?"

I said, "Sahib, no one had asked them to become Christians. If they embraced Christianity of their own free will, what could one do? This will cause no harm to me or to the wider Hindu society?"

To this Sahib said with great pride, "This is true that nobody asked them to become Christians, but your Hindu society had treated them so cruelly that they had no alternative in front of them but to become a Christian or a Muslim. They converted to save their lives. There was no other solution. If you continue to behave like this with untouchables, the day is not far when all the untouchables will relinquish Hinduism and take refuge in other religions. This will cause a big disruption in Hindu society. Will your women work as midwives? Will you do the work of a washerman? Will you do the work of a cobbler? Now they are still with you, you dislike them and treat them cruelly. But when they abandon you, then you will cry copious tears for them. From the moment they separate from you, they will become your enemies - deadly enemies.

Only because of ignorance - because of your false nobility and hypocrisy, you will alienate a very large section of the Hindu community. Imagine how much strength and support seven crore people can have? However, if you treat them with love and humanity, they will be willing to shed their blood in exchange of your sweat. If you abandon such a huge force, imagine how weak your religion will become! Ok Pandit, one more thing. Tell me, if the same Damru Basor, became a Christian and and sat next to you, will you hate him or not?"

I replied, "Sahib, why would I hate him? No one hates Christians."



Sahib laughed and said, "Kudos to your people's intelligence! Earlier you hated him, why? Because at that time he was a Hindu he bowed his head respectfully to your Thakur ji. And now you do not hate him because he is no longer a Hindu; and looks at your Thakur ji with hatred! By touching a Ram devotee, your religion begins to waver. And by kissing the feet of Ram haters your religion remains pure and unshakable! What kind of foolishness is this! Oh, you guys are blind even though you have eyes.! Pandit, in the cool shade of Jesus, poor Damru made considerable progress and today after changing his name to Thomas he has become the Tehsildar and your boss and master! Seeing the Damru of old, the blood of the Hindu community used to run cold. Today the same big religious leaders stand with folded hands in front of Damru. You are one of them. Tell me, will you still continue to hate the untouchables?"

On hearing this I felt stunned! At first, I thought Sahib's tale was a joke. But soon I understood everything. A veil was lifted from before my eyes. Today I really understood why we torture the untouchables! At that very moment I took a pledge in front of Sahib – from now on, all untouchables will be my brothers and sisters. I will never hate them; I will always love them. I will consider it my duty to participate in their happiness and sorrow. I will also persuade my other fellow brethren to do the same.

End